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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 001034

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SA, SA/INS, S/CT; NSC FOR E. MILLARD

LONDON FOR POL/RIEDEL

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PINS](#) [PHUM](#) [CE](#) [LTTE](#)

SUBJECT: Reports continue to flow in linking the Tigers to violence against Tamil opponents

Refs: Colombo 1029 (Notal), and previous

(U) Classified by Ambassador E. Ashley Wills.
Reasons: 1.5 (b,d).

1. (C) SUMMARY: Reports continue to flow in linking the Tigers to violence against Tamil opponents. In addition to over 20 killings in recent months, the latest incidents involve the slayings of two Tamils in the east. The GSL is having problems proving Tiger involvement, though it may have garnered a break when it captured two suspected Tigers this week. The killings have contributed to a growing sense of unease about the Tigers. END SUMMARY.

2. (C) MORE KILLINGS: Reports continue to flow in linking the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) organization to violence against Tamil opponents. The latest incidents include the slayings of two anti-LTTE Tamils in Sri Lanka's Eastern Province. In the first incident, a former member of the Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP) was shot and killed on June 7 outside of Trincomalee town. In the second incident, a former member of the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO) and his young child were killed in a hand grenade explosion on June 6 near Batticaloa town.

3. (C) These latest killings come on top of those of about 20 anti-LTTE Tamils since the start of the year (see Reftels). The victims have been divided into two broad categories: (1) Members or former activists of anti-LTTE parties (such as the victims in the two most recent killings); and, (2) Tamils who work or formerly worked as informants for Sri Lanka's military.

4. (C) PROVING LTTE INVOLVEMENT DIFFICULT: As with virtually all of the previous killings, no one has been arrested in the latest incidents. The wave of attacks have been extremely well-planned with the perpetrators often driving quickly away in vehicles and melting away after that. Contacts in the government and other observers, however, universally believe that the LTTE is to blame. In a June 12 conversation, for example, Taranjit Sandhu, Indian High Commission polchief, told us that the incidents have all the hallmarks of LTTE targeted assassinations. Sandhu also noted the obvious fact that those who have been killed are or were anti-LTTE activists, making the Tigers the party that would feel it had the most to gain by employing such terror tactics. Sandhu went on to note unconfirmed reports circulating in the north and east that LTTE leader V. Prabhakaran has actually issued written instructions for anti-Tiger Tamils to be killed.

5. (C) For its part, the LTTE has denied it is involved in the killings. These claims have been echoed by pro-Tiger politicians. In a recent meeting with the Ambassador, for example, Kumar Ponnambalam, a MP for the Tamil National Alliance with close LTTE associations, was adamant that there was absolutely no evidence linking the LTTE to the crimes.

6. (C) A BREAK?: The GSL might have garnered a break in their efforts to prove the Tigers' involvement in the killings. As first reported in Reftels, two suspected LTTE cadre were stopped during a random police check in central Colombo on the evening of June 10. The two men who were armed tried to run away, but were captured, with one of them swallowing a cyanide tablet. The two men are now in custody, with the one who took cyanide in critical condition in a hospital. Government officials have told us that they believe that the two suspected cadre were apparently on their way to try to assassinate a Tamil informant for the military when they were intercepted. At this point, interrogation of the one healthy suspect is continuing, with the government relatively sure that it has netted its first big breakthrough regarding the recent spate of killings.

7. (C) ((Note: Shortly after the two suspects were captured on June 10, two policemen were captured by the

LTTE in the Trincomalee area. The LTTE has announced that it is holding the two policemen captive until the GSL releases a LTTE cadre who is now in jail. There was some initial speculation that the LTTE might be holding the two policemen in exchange for the LTTE suspects arrested in Colombo, but this has not yet panned out. The Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission is looking into the matter and is trying to arrange a meeting with the LTTE to discuss it.))

18. (C) COMMENT: While the government tries to catch the perpetrators of the killings, there is little doubt that the LTTE is the culprit. As noted, the attacks have all the hallmarks of LTTE operations, including -- as with the June 10 incident -- the use of cyanide by an operative who is captured. In addition to the LTTE's increasingly shrill communications turning down offers to restart the peace talks, the recent killings have contributed mightily to a growing sense of unease about the Tigers and their intentions. END COMMENT.

19. (U) Minimize considered.

WILLS